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# AMERICAN POWS SENT TO USSR, YELTSIN SAYS

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**By Associated Press**

American prisoners of the Vietnam War were transferred to the Soviet Union, and some still could be alive, Russian President Boris Yeltsin revealed.

Yeltsin's spokesman, Vyacheslav Kostikov, said Monday night that 2,800 U.S. citizens "found themselves on Soviet soil" after World War I, World War II and Vietnam, and "many were held in prison. Most of them have died," he said. Asked if any have survived, he added, "It's not excluded."

At a picture-taking session in the Oval Office, Yeltsin was asked if there were any American POWs in what was formerly the Soviet Union.

"It's very possible that there are a few of them still left alive," he said. "We shall try to investigate each individual case, and all the information will be, of course, handed over to the American side," he said.

President Bush said he was confident that "they will get to the bottom of it and if any single American is unaccounted for, they will go the extra mile to see that that person is accounted for."

State Department spokesman Joe Snyder said late Monday that Yeltsin's disclosure is a major one. U.S. authorities have in the past asked the Soviets for information about Vietnam-era POWs, he said.

"I certainly have never heard any Russian or Soviet admit it," he said.

Sens. John Kerry, D-Mass., and Robert Smith, R-N.H., said in Moscow in February that Russian authorities had acknowledged the possibility of POWs being brought to the Soviet Union after the Vietnam War but that there was no evidence any were still there.

Smith, vice chairman with Kerry of the Senate POW-MIA panel, said the reports "should come as no surprise to officials in the intelligence community of this country, because we have had reports like this for years."

"And if you think this kind of information is dramatic and startling, wait 'til you see the information that begins to come out on Laos and Vietnam, which our committee investigators are now uncovering," he said during an appearance Tuesday on ABC's "Good Morning America."